

Positioning at the Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service

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SUMMARY

Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service (Vapepa) is an organization coordinated by Finnish Red Cross. The purpose of Voluntary Rescue Service is to help public authority (police) in cases where the resources of authority are insufficient e.g. searching of missing people. Vapepa is an organization of different societies like first-aid groups, off-road clubs, hunting societies, service dog clubs, search and rescue teams etc. Individual can be a member of Vapepa via being a member of these societies. Vapepa is working by Bring Your Own -principle. Members of different societies are volunteered and they are committed to be a member of alert groups. Of course the taking a part to operations is non-compulsory. The possible operations are regularly practiced. The searching operation is always lead by police and the field leader of Vapepa is giving an assistance to the police. Vapepa field leader has to know the situation on the field, where the different teams are searching, what they have possible found on the field and are the clues relevant to the operation. The operation lead has to know the true location of teams and possible clues immediately especially if there is a life-saving operation on the run. Handheld GNSS receivers are coming more common and most of the smart phones include the positioning feature. Volunteers are using devices in rehearsals and operations. Because of the most volunteers are layman of positioning they have no knowledge and experiences of using the device or its limitations. Unfortunately they are trusting to the devices too much. In same time the orienteering skills of average volunteer are insufficient. To help the gaining the up-to-date and correct data from the field mr. Sami Heinonen has developed an application to gain the GIS data from field via smart phones. For users is developed an easy-to-use smart phone application to gain GIS data to operation lead. Application is very good example of volunteered geographical information, VGI. The program is about to come for operations. To increase the knowledge of positioning Vapepa published instructions concerning satellite positioning and coordinate systems in year 2009. The instruction needs an update. For the alert groups of Oulu region has given training and lessons of positioning and the reliability of devices. The aim of the lessons has been to give the more realistic judgment of devices and the limitation of positioning systems, such as the different error causes. As a conclusion for this paper author suggest Vapepa to encourage alert groups to use GNSS receivers and support the training to gain higher level of positioning skills. Also the usage of VAPEPA-TUTKA has to be more familiar to the volunteers.